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19 April 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum entitled
"Military Action in Korea", dated 5 April

The National Estimates Board has considered the above-entitled Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum. The only section of this paper which falls within the province of this Office is section #2, on which the Board has the following comment to make:

We believe it an unwarranted assumption that Soviet immediate objectives are concentrated in either Europe or in Asia, to the exclusion of the other. The USSR has the capability of moving in Europe and the Far East concurrently and it is probable that Soviet immediate objectives include any area which offers an opportunity for expansion without an unacceptable risk of precipitating general war.

Even on the assumption that immediate Soviet objectives are centered on Western Europe, it is arguable whether the Soviets would consider it wholly to their advantage that UN forces remain committed in Korea. As against the obvious advantage of tying up UN forces in Korea, the Soviets would have to weigh the possibility that these UN forces might drive the Communist forces out of Korea, thereby precipitating a crisis in Sino-Soviet relations and posing the possibility that the USSR might be obliged prematurely to precipitate a general war by intervening in force against the UN troops. On the other hand, a withdrawal of UN troops from Korea without a settlement of the Korean issue satisfactory to the UN, would have the political and propaganda advantage for the Soviets and Chinese Communists of a major victory and the strategic advantage of control of Korea and relief of the pressure on Chinese Communist troops and resources.

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The disadvantage to the USSR of a withdrawal of UN forces from Korea would be that these forces could be redeployed elsewhere. However, it is unlikely that these forces could all be made available for use in Europe.

On the assumption that Soviet immediate objectives are centered in the Far East, it is likewise arguable whether the Soviets would consider it entirely advantageous to them to have the UN forces withdraw from Korea. So long as the Korean issue remains unsettled and so long as UN forces are contained in Korea, the Soviets are assured of their hold over the Peiping Government and can reckon on the likelihood of dissension between the UN powers, as well as the unlikelihood of effective UN support for anti-Communist forces in Southeast Asia.

WILLIAM L. LANGER
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